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ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF TABOO DEVIANCY:

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THEORIES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....

Examining Committee

Position and Theories of Cause.....

Levi R. Aiken, Jr.

Environmental Theory of Homosexuality.....

John Gordon Shivers

Sexual Society and the Homosexual.....

Anne L. Lewis

Sexuals and the Homosexual.....

Conclusion.....

Bibliography.....

Biography.....

ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF TABOO DEVIANCE:
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THEORETICAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	page 1
Definition and Theories of Cause.....	page 4
The Environmental Theory of Homosexuality.....	page 12
American Society and the Homosexual.....	page 21
Subcultures and the Homosexual.....	page 28
Conclusion.....	page 32
Footnotes.....	page 1
Bibliography.....	page iv

ON THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF TABOO DEVIANCY:
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Introduction:

The term taboo deviancy inherently implies several important aspects of its analysis. First, the word deviancy necessarily connotes some standard of behavior from which it is deviant. The prefix taboo, by its dictionary definition, denotes behavior which is forbidden by social convention. When we put the two words together it is clear that we are talking about behavior which is not only "abnormal," in the statistical sense, but which is also negatively sanctioned by the society, and here we mean the American society. Assuming that one purpose of social science is to provide us with information about the society in which we live, what can an analysis of taboo deviancy add to this knowledge? The fact that behavior which is taboo is so negatively sanctioned indicates that society believes that it should not exist at all. Its existence, then, makes it a social problem regardless of the number of people it involves:

Though the number of people directly affected is always a factor, ²in determining what is a social problem, it is not always the ultimate criterion by which the seriousness of a social problem is measured. A social problem is also a serious one if it represents a failure on the part of the social order to realize the values to which it is committed.¹

By analyzing in depth an example of taboo deviancy, an example which is closely associated with the social order, we may hope to discover some specific ways in which the society fails to reach the ideal state to which it aspires.

In recent years the development and gradual improvement of methods of social research have helped to describe, to analyze and to explain human behavior with more assurance and accuracy than ever before. Social problems of all descriptions have been analyzed, many quite thoroughly and skillfully, giving rise to an ever-increasing body of good theory. As with all human behavior, however, what can be objectively and accurately studied in any culture is subject to the normative restrictions in that culture. Research which purports to explain behavior which is taboo in the society, when it is attempted at all, must contend with many knotty problems. For example, the extent of the behavior is almost impossible to estimate. Procuring reliable subjects, even when protecting their identities, is extremely difficult. If a sub-culture exists around the behavior, gaining entrée is not easy, and once inside one can never be sure whether the behavior exhibited, with an outsider present, is typical.

In the American society there is perhaps no behavior more strongly taboo than homosexuality. Study of homosexuality poses another problem for the researcher--the problem of suspicion. Few people, even in the interests of academic pursuit, want to place themselves in a suspect position. Thus, the problem of homosexuality has been neglected, for the most part, as an area of analysis and study. Most attention which has been given the subject has come from psychiatrists or clinical psychologists in the form of case histories. Most of the theory concerning the etiology and treatment

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of homosexuality has been composed of elaborations on the theory of Sigmund Freud. Only a little theory of a less mystical nature has been set down--chiefly by the behavioristic school in psychology and scattered here and there in sociological works, primarily in the area of social psychology.

It is the aim of this paper to analyze the problem of homosexuality from a sociological point of view. Hopefully, bits and pieces of analysis appearing in the literature can be gathered together into a unified and fairly detailed analysis of both the individual homosexual and the sub-culture which exists around homosexual behavior. In the course of analysis an attempt will be made to bring in those aspects of Freudian theory which seem to enhance the analysis in a meaningful way and which may give greater insight and clarity to the study. To begin, there will be a general section on definition and terminology, including several theories of the cause of homosexuality. Next will be a discussion of the environmental theory of cause focusing on child-rearing practices as they may be seen to influence the development of homosexual behavior. This will be followed by a consideration of the American society and particularly the normative system, including both the formal and informal prescriptions concerning homosexual behavior. Finally there will be an analysis of the development of sub-cultures within the American society and of the development and operation of the homosexual sub-culture in particular.

Definition and Theories of Cause:

As a general term homosexuality refers to the tendency of some individuals to seek erotic relationships with members of their own sex. English and English in their A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms make an important distinction:

When definite genital gratification is meant...the term HOMOGENITALISM is more precise; where the sexual element is highly sublimated, HOMOEROTISM is more precise. Homosexuality is used for the entire range, with no necessary implication of genital practices.²

Terms abound, differing in degrees of respectability, which are roughly synonymous with homosexuality, or are used to designate certain types of homosexual behavior. Among the more eloquent of these are Sapphism, Greek Love, and Uranism. Sapphism is derived from the name of the famous poetess, Sappho, of Ancient Greece who founded a school for young women on the isle of Lesbos. Sapphism refers to female homosexuality, as does Lesbianism (derived from Lesbos) which is the more common term. In Ancient Greece homosexuality was widely practiced by both men and women. Love-objects held in high esteem by men were young "beautiful" boys. It is from this period that the name Greek Love comes as a synonym for homosexuality. Uranism is a word coined by a German writer and civil servant as an appositive for homosexuality.

Ulrichs found inspiration for his etymology in the planet Uranus, which, of all the planets visible to the naked eye, is furthest from the sun and therefore nearest to heaven; love for one's own sex was likewise the most heavenly of physical passions, he contended.³

Words such as inversion, perversion, pederasty, sodomy, buggery,

and homophile often appear in psychological, sociological and legal treatments of the subject of homosexuality. Inversion implies that there is a reversal of normal roles and may most often refer to effeminate men and masculine women who are also homosexual. Per-
version is a term widely used by the general public and appears often in print. English and English have this to say, "In professional usage there is no implication of inherent pathology, hence PERVERSION is not acceptable as a synonym."⁴ Pederasty is a type of pedophilia, love for children, in which the love-objects are young boys and the lovers, older men. Sodomy derives its name from the ancient Biblical "sinful" city of Sodom. Although it is not confined to homosexuality, it is sometimes used in that context to refer to the love of younger males for older men.⁵ Buggery is a term used in legal terminology along with "crime against nature" in statutes outlawing homosexuality. Homophile, literally, love of same, shows a less derogatory attitude in its use by omitting the implication of sexual involvement.

Among the less respectable nomenclature are found such names as "queer," "fairy," "pansy," "homo," "queen," "fruit," "man-lover," "lady-lover," and "bugger." "Fairy," "pansy," "queen," and "fruit" refer particularly to effeminate homosexual men. "Man-lover" designates a male homosexual and "lady-lover" a female homosexual. "Queer," "homo," "bugger," are used to refer to both sexes. These words are used primarily outside the homosexual sub-culture. They carry with them various degrees of degrading connotations which make them unacceptable to the avowed homosexual in much the same way as

the term "nigger" is unacceptable to Negroes.

The most extensive use of these words seems to be as incorporations into the innumerable jokes about homosexuals. The famous sexologist Dr. Albert Ellis notes:

The jokes about homosexuals in modern America take on a somewhat sadistic, ridiculing tinge--which is not at all evident in regard to anecdotes about adulterers, fornicators, and other heterosexual offenders against public morals.... Even when the contemporary American laughs at sexual 'perversion,' then, he tends to do so in a rather nasty, sickly way. When deviant sex behavior is not faced antagonistically or with morbid humor, it is rarely faced at all.⁶

It would be interesting to discover why people find these sadistic and morbid expressions humorous. Perhaps a factor is that so stringent are the cultural prescriptions concerning this type of behavior, and yet it is recognized that human nature is frail and fallible; thus, to talk in serious terms concerning such subjects as homosexuality would be a threat too great.

Many would say that those who laugh loudest are those for whom the threat is greatest. Of course, such a speculation cannot be easily verified; yet, there is significance in the general observation that laughter often serves as a tension-release and as a cover for pent-up anxiety. Whether or not one can say, however, that one who finds jokes about homosexuals exceptionally humorous has specific anxiety concerning his own sexual tendencies, is a matter of contention. He may be simply and generally an anxious person, or even a "normal", if perhaps narrow, person. On the other hand, he may be a relatively well-adjusted practicing homosexual who feels he must

participate in such joking in order to protect his own self-acknowledged tendencies; or perhaps, a less well-adjusted practicing homosexual who hopes to convince himself that he is not "really" a homosexual if he can laugh at such derogatory jokes. The point is that laughter cannot be used as an index of homosexual conflict, but the fact that the anecdotes concerning homosexuals in this culture take on a "sadistic, ridiculing tinge" does indicate that most Americans do not want to be openly identified with homosexuality.

Since, because of the taboo, anonymity is a necessity for a practicing homosexual, is it then possible to distinguish those who are homosexual from those who are not? A common misconception is that homosexuals can be recognized by their physical appearances. All effeminate men and all masculine women are labeled "queer" by the general public. It is surprising to most people to discover that many homosexuals are extremely virile-looking men and quite effeminate women. Dr. Georgene Seward in her rather thorough study, Sex and the Social Order, notes:

Association between homosexual tendencies and physical anomalies need not, however, imply a causal relationship. It may not be the structural defects as such that cause the sexual deviation but rather the psychological reaction to them. The presence of physical characteristics of the opposite sex may create conflict in the individual and lead to redirection of the libido. The inconsistencies in 'corrective' hormone effects lend further support to a psychological interpretation.

Many authorities have made statements similar to this one by de Savitsch: "In genuine homosexuality the physical acts are the

outcome of an inherent condition, a condition which, it cannot be too strongly stressed, is unalterable."⁸ Statements such as this are usually based upon the genetic balance theory of sex determination. This theory claims that human beings possess from conception both male and female germ cells. "To a certain degree, therefore, certain latent physiological elements of the opposite sex are present in all organisms, and sex is largely a matter of degree."⁹ This theory has fostered the conviction that homosexuality is a result of an inherited imbalance of sex determinants. The theory perhaps adequately explains why certain men possess observable feminine characteristics and certain women, male characteristics; but, it has not been widely accepted as an adequate theory for the cause of homosexuality.

In an attempt to verify the theory, many researchers have experimented with hormone injections hoping to produce homosexual behavior in various animals and attempting to "cure" human homosexuals. The results of many of these experiments are presented in Frank A. Beach's Hormones and Behavior. Beach finds many inconsistencies in the results and thus concludes:

All in all there has been an unfortunate tendency to place an oversimplified interpretation on behavior changes consequent to experimental manipulations of the gonadal hormones.... An exaggerated notion of the specificity of hormonal effects upon mating behavior in lower animals, together with lack of appreciation of the relative importance of sociopsychologic versus physiologic influences in man, has led some investigators to conclude that sexual aberrations in the human may be referred in rather simple fashion to endocrine abnormalities.... Ellis (1945) has surveyed the reports

of sexual behavior and libido of 84 human hermaphrodites, and finds that in the great majority of cases the preferred sex role and direction of desire are in accord with the masculine or feminine upbringing, regardless of the nature of the external and internal sexual morphology. It is concluded that the determination of psychologic sexuality in such cases depends primarily upon environmental factors, and is relatively independent of possible hormonal effects.¹⁰

Paralleling the theory of physiological bi-sexuality is the Freudian hypothesis of psychic bi-sexuality. Freud states that in the course of normal sexual development, the child is attracted to both sexes. With the proper role-identification he comes, in maturity, to seek members of the opposite sex as sexual objects. Freud makes it clear that:

Psychoanalytic research very strongly opposes the attempt to separate homosexuals from other persons as a group of a special nature. By also studying sexual excitations different than those manifestly overt, it discovers that all men are capable of homosexual object selection and actually accomplish this in the unconscious. Indeed, attachments of libidinous feelings to persons of the same sex play no small role as factors in the normal psychic life,...In the psychoanalytic sense the exclusive sexual interest of the man for the woman is also a problem requiring an explanation, and is not something that is self-evident and explainable on the basis of chemical attraction.¹¹

Freud would claim, then, that the sexual adjustment which could be expected of all persons, psychologically speaking, is an equal interest in both men and women as sexual objects. In most cultures, however, the process of socialization includes educating youth in the "proper" sex-role identification which normally leads to heterosexual sex interests.

Freud in his theory of infantile sexuality outlined seven

psychosexual developmental levels. During what he called the "phallic stage" the Oedipus complex arises. This has been characterized as "a mixture of love, jealousy, inferiority, and guilt occasioned by the child's possessive sexual attraction to the parent of the opposite sex."¹² When the child is unable to resolve his guilt feelings engendered by hostility toward the parent with whom he feels he is "competing" for the attentions of the other parent, he may become fixated at this stage, or he may later regress to it. In order to somehow alleviate his guilt the child may identify with the parent of the opposite sex in the manner of a reaction formation and may in this way contribute to the possibility of homosexual development. On the other hand, the child may over-identify with the parent of the same sex and, motivated by hostility, attempt to overcome this parent in a contest for the other's affections. Freud also cites the danger of faulty sex-role identification in situations where there is an absence of a strong parent of the same sex as the child, or in a situation where the child is consciously or unconsciously brought up as a child of the opposite sex. All of these reactions may be on an unconscious level and thus, may not be recognized by the parents and are probably forgotten by the child through the mechanism of "infantile amnesia."

Some empirical evidence has supported Freud's theory of bisexuality. The most outstanding evidence is afforded by the development and use of the Terman-Miles Masculinity-Femininity Test. In the report of their findings, Sex and Personality, Terman and Miles

have demonstrated quite conclusively that people can be arranged along a continuum of masculinity-femininity in terms of various psychological and sociological variables. In discussing a study of male homosexuality, they note that their group of passive male homosexuals (those who take a feminine role in a homosexual relationship) are "by far the most feminine-testing group of males encountered in our investigations, more feminine in fact than our group of outstanding college women athletes."¹³ These passive male homosexuals were not necessarily feminine in appearance but they had shown definite feminine interests since childhood. The researchers note further, however, that active male homosexuals (those assuming the male role in homosexual relationships) rated high in masculinity. As might be expected, the female active and passive homosexuals responded oppositely to their male counterparts--the actives rating high in masculinity and the passives rating high in femininity. From these results the authors hypothesize that there may be separate genetic theories of active and of passive homosexuality.

Freud's most significant contribution to a theory of homosexuality is his stress upon environmental factors. Whether or not one accepts his theory of infantile sexuality and fixation, it is still of great importance that he insisted upon the significance of early influences on the child's later development. Identification with the parent of the opposite sex does contribute to many cases of homosexuality whether it is prompted by Oedipal conflict or not. Many homosexuals do have anxiety and guilt generating from hostility

toward one or both parents and many realize through therapy that they are attempting to recreate a mother-son, or father-daughter, or some other parent-child relationship through their homosexual activities. The cause of the hostility is not so important as the recognition of it.

The Environmental Theory of Homosexuality:

The preceding theories, in the final analysis, seem to all reach the conclusion that the development of homosexuality is more a function of environmental factors than of any other single variable. As with all theories of human behavior, it is important not to completely disregard possible influences of biological inheritance. Yet, it has been fairly widely recognized that the over-whelming majority of behavior is learned. Behavior which is considered "proper" for specific situations and times is virtually determined by the culture of which one is a part. There are no absolutes in propriety, thus, behavior can only be judged as "suitable" or "unsuitable" within the context of the culture in which it appears. It is primarily through the process of socialization that the child learns what is considered "appropriate" behavior in his culture. If this process is faulty, then it is likely that the child will exhibit behavior which is not wholly acceptable in his culture. Recognizing the tremendous importance of child-rearing practices in determining the success or failure of the process of socialization, this discussion will focus upon their operation in relation to the development of homosexuality.

Many factors have been suggested as playing a causative role in the development of homosexuality. Two references with which I am familiar, give greater diversity and more detail in their listings than others. Both of these books are written utilizing a subjective approach. Ann Aldrich, at the time her book, We Walk Alone, was published, had spent "fifteen years of participation in society as a female homosexual."¹⁴ The material appearing in her book "has been gleaned from original study, free discussion with professional people who have investigated various aspects of homosexuality in the female, frequent conversations with actual lesbians, and personal experience."¹⁵ Donald Webster Cory (pseud.), in 1951, at the time of the publication of his book The Homosexual in America, had spent twenty-five years as a homosexual. Dr. Albert Ellis, who wrote the preface for Cory's book, says the author "has intelligently explored many of the sociological, psychological, cultural, religious, and other problems that now exist in regard to homosexuality....It is a decidedly serious, honest, discerning, moving, and creditable piece of work."¹⁶

In the interest of clarity and to avoid repetition I have condensed and combined the factors listed by Aldrich and Cory. They appear on the following page.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HOMOSEXUALITY	
In the Male	In the Female
1. Unbalanced love for the mother.	
2. Effort to replace father if he is absent, dead or inadequate (may generate hostility).	
3. Identification with mother (Perhaps motivated by rejection)	Identification with father.
4. Lack of love from mother, or absence of mother. Boy may attempt to replace her in relationship with father, or he may feel hostile toward mother.	Girl will usually react with some hostility; she recreates mother-child relationship with homosexual partner; if father is rejecting may be genesis of fear of men.
5. Faulty sex education, with horrors of sex painted in lurid colors, and the entire thought of sex unable to be linked with love between man and woman.	
6. Predisposition to effeminacy. (or physical weakness)	Predisposition to masculinity. (or physical strength)
7. Reared as a girl because of parent's desire for a girl.	Reared as a boy because of parent's desire for a boy.
8. Parent's anxiety concerning child's proper sex-role identification.	
9. Introduction to successful homosexual pursuits during adolescent years.	
10. Idolization of woman leading to fear of marring her purity.	Fear of men, sexual relations, pregnancy, submission; may be in form of resentment.
11. Unfamiliarity with the opposite sex.	
12. Fear of inadequacy which might lead to rejection.	17

It can easily be seen from the preceding table that the relationship which the child has with his parents is of prime importance in the development of homosexuality. We shall take only slight exception to placing such heavy emphasis upon the training which the child receives from his parents. Alex Inkeles has made the point that:

it hardly necessarily follows that experience in childhood associations, adolescent groupings, and early adult activity will be so congruent with infant training as to support and reinforce these early tendencies.¹⁸

Mr. Inkeles' point is well-taken and leads us to the hypothesis that a child who has been subjected to a faulty process of socialization and is therefore predisposed to homosexuality and yet, does not develop homosexual behavior or has only short-term and minor experience with it, was probably guided in the direction of heterosexuality by influences outside his family which were strong enough to overcome his earlier training. Here, however, we are more concerned with those who do develop homosexual behavior and with some of the early factors which gave rise to their sexuality. We shall assume that later support and reinforcement was forthcoming outside the home.

A child's first attachment is to his mother. The quality of this first relationship has a great bearing on the child's later development. Eric Homburger Erikson has delineated seven components of what he considers a "healthy personality." The first and perhaps most important component Dr. Erikson discusses is "basic trust."

Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by that kind of administration which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs

and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their community's life style. (This forms the basis in the child for a sense of identity which will later combine a sense of being "all right," of being oneself, and of becoming what other people trust one will become.) Parents must not only have certain ways of guiding by prohibition and permission; they must also be able to represent to the child a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what they are doing.¹⁹

A later development which is essential to the healthy personality is termed "autonomy" by Dr. Erikson.

From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of autonomy and pride;... To develop autonomy, a firmly developed and a convincingly continued stage of early trust is necessary... Firmness must protect him [the child] against the potential anarchy of his as yet untrained sense of discrimination,... Yet his environment must back him up in his wish to 'stand on his own feet' lest he be overcome by that sense of having exposed himself prematurely and foolishly which we call shame, or that secondary mistrust, that looking back after a double-take, which we call doubt.²⁰

The third basic ingredient is "initiative."

This stage, then, adds to the inventory of basic social modalities in both sexes that of 'making' in the older and today slangier sense of 'being on the make.'... The word suggests enjoyment of competition, insistence on goal, pleasure of conquest. In the boy the emphasis remains on 'making' by head-on attack; in the girl it sooner or later changes to 'making' by making herself attractive and endearing. The child thus develops the prerequisites for masculine and feminine initiative, that is, for the selection of social goals and perseverance in approaching them.²¹

Upon the foundation of these three stages, the healthy personality proceeds to add additional accomplishments and to simultaneously improve upon the older ones. He adds in succession industry

or learning by doing, identity or "the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity (one's ego in the psychological sense) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others."²² Here one enters into adulthood and continues through three stages of adult accomplishment. First is the stage of intimacy and distantiation. At this point the person feels a "need for a kind of fusion with the essence of other people;" while, at the same time, he is in "readiness to repudiate, to isolate, and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own."²³ The second adult stage is that of generativity which is "primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation,..."²⁴ The final attainment is that of integrity.

Only he who in some way has taken care of things and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent to being, by necessity, the originator of others and the generator of things and ideas--only he may gradually grow the fruit of the seven stages. I know no better word for it than integrity.²⁵

The purpose in introducing Dr. Erikson's conception of the healthy personality is to give us some indication of where the process of socialization may go astray when it forms a basis of sexual deviancy. Within the framework provided by Erikson let us go back and examine the items in the chart.²⁶ The point must be made that it would be rare to find a case in which all the factors enumerated would be operative in contributing to homosexuality. Nor, can we say with assurance that these are the only factors which may lead to homo-

sexuality. They appear here as those factors most often cited.

Since the child's first relationship is with his mother, and since we have seen how vitally important the quality of this relationship is, it is not surprising that disturbances in it appear among the factors contributing to homosexuality. Lack of basic trust seems to be a prominent aspect of the homosexual personality. He is anxious, full of guilt, and fearful. Several things may happen in the mother-child relationship which may favor the development of homosexuality. A mother who fails to communicate love to her child fails to give him an adequate basis for developing trust in himself and others. Without this trust the child cannot develop a sense of adequacy, nor can he easily form meaningful relationships with others. The mother who loves too much, encourages dependence. A dependent child, just as the child who lacks basic trust, may never be able to develop the necessary autonomy to be an individual in his own right. A child who both mistrusts and is dependent cannot easily develop initiative--that reaching out and experimenting with the role that is to be his in the future.

The child who continues to blindly love his mother as he did in infancy is very likely to remain dependent upon her. The boy may identify with her instead of his father. The mother who encourages this blind devotion or approves of her son's interest in feminine occupations may very well be contributing to the development of homosexuality in her child.

The father is the next person with whom the child forms a close

relationship. If he is over-protective, rejecting, indifferent, harsh,--indeed, if he is extreme in his attitude toward his children in any direction--the child is likely to be affected. His daughter may identify with him instead of with her mother, or she may try to assume his proper role if he is absent or inadequate. His son may attempt to assume his father's place and thereby become inordinately attached to his mother.

Any of these occurrences in the parent-child relationship may generate feelings of hostility in the child. These feelings can begin when the child senses an "imminent powerful danger and an attitude of helplessness toward it."²⁷ This can happen to the child whose needs are not met, who is insecure, or who is dependent and yet untrusting. The child's impulse is to feel hostile because of his helplessness. He soon learns, however, that overt hostility will not be tolerated and that he is expected to love his parents no matter what. Thus, he represses his hostility and, in its repressed state it becomes a basis for anxiety which may be manifest in specific fears.

Case history after case history reveals evidence of just such relationships as those mentioned above. Often one can see in these histories an attempt on the part of the homosexual to re-create some aspect of the parent-child relationship. Men may seek young men partners whom they can love as their mothers loved them. Younger women may seek older women with whom they can have a mother-daughter relationship like they wish it could have been with their own mothers.

Masculine female homosexuals or active male homosexuals may seek a partner who is "just like the girl who married dear old Dad." Often the same attitudes which were manifested by the parents toward the child will later be adopted by the child toward his homosexual partner. It is now clear then that the parent-child relationship is of great importance to the child's later development. It involves not only how well the parents teach their children but also how well the parents themselves accept their own roles not only as parents but as men and women.

Most of the other factors listed in the chart can be seen to have an obvious relationship with the development of homosexuality. Faulty sex education may lead either to ignorance or fear. Ignorance breeds experimentation which may well lead to successful homosexual pursuits during the adolescent years. Fear generated by a faulty sex education coupled with feelings of hostility may lead to generalized anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, specific fears of men or women, of sexual relations, of pregnancy, of intimacy in any form. A predisposition to the physical characteristics of the opposite sex need not be a determining factor in homosexuality if the child has been given the proper adult models with whom to identify and has been encouraged to pursue the correct sex-role interests. Being reared as a child of the opposite sex is bound to pose problems for the child even if it doesn't lead to homosexual behavior.

It is not our purpose here to put forth an indictment of parents of homosexuals. To begin, childhood training is not irreversible.

The quotation we cited from Mr. Inkeles at the beginning of this section²⁸ pointed to the fact that later influences upon the child may significantly change his final adjustment. Further, the child must be initiated into homosexuality either through experimentation or seduction before he can recognize his potential for homosexual behavior. This is not to say that he may not have other problems as a result of his upbringing, but only that his problems may not include homosexuality. Finally, homosexuality can be cured if the patient truly wants to change his behavior through psychiatric treatment. Thus, some responsibility must be laid to the individual homosexual himself to seek out ways of attaining an adequate response to his society. In the next section we shall discuss what the homosexual may expect of his society both in actuality and in the ideal.

American Society and the Homosexual:

American society makes little differentiation in its attitude concerning the person who is inadvertantly drawn into a homosexual relationship and the person who consciously chooses a homosexual way of life. Society's opinion is intrinsically bound up in the normative system.

When members of society behave predictably to each other according to these rules, norms they experience reciprocal trust and social agreement about ends of action. Deviants who depart from these basic societal rules break down this trust.²⁹

Kirson Weinberg has ennumerated among his listing of some basic norms:

"Heterosexual channelization of sex in marriage and by consenting

partners, moderate and responsible behavior in fulfilling one's role, rationality and responsibility in the control of one's impulses and in managing one's affairs, self-care and health."³⁰ Robin

Williams in American Society has noted:

There is usually a 'permissive' zone of variation around even the most specific and strongly supported norms; certain kinds and degrees of over-conformity and of underconformity are expected and tolerated.³¹

This zone of permissiveness when applied to homosexual behavior is quite narrow. Very little latitude is given to sex-role experimentation despite the fact that society often fails to adequately prepare persons for the proper adult sex-role. The youth is expected to choose and succeed in adequately fulfilling the proper sex-role whether he has been trained to do so or not.

A basis for the stringency of the restrictions concerning homosexual behavior may be found in the Judeo-Christian code. Most of us are familiar with the story in Genesis which tells of Lot's protection of the two beautiful man-like angels sent from God. The men of the city of Sodom, notorious for their homosexual activities, demanded of Lot who was hiding the angels in his house, "Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them." When Lot refused the angels took him and his family out of the city and told him, "We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."³² Again, in Leviticus there is the command, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is

abomination."³³ Thus, like other portions of our moral code, the negative sanction of homosexuality is a part of our Judeo-Christian inheritance.

This negative religious sanction gradually came to be incorporated into the body of informal social restrictions, separate from, but not exclusive of, the religious restriction. Eventually the restriction was written into law and the practice of homosexuality became a crime. At present every state in the United States has a law which makes male homosexuality punishable by a prison sentence (varying in length from a minimum of one year to a maximum of life at hard labor), or by a fine ranging from \$100.00 to \$5,000.00, or in some states by both a sentence and a fine.³⁴

John M. Murtagh, administrative judge of the Criminal Court of the City of New York, recently reviewed The Wolfenden Report: Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution in the Saturday Review. This committee five years ago presented a report to the British Parliament in which it recommended that homosexual acts taking place in private between two consenting adults no longer be considered a crime in Great Britain. Judge Murtagh reports that the American Law Institute in 1955 drafted the Model Penal Code which contained a recommendation similar to that in the Wolfenden Report. The philosophy behind this recommendation was

that "no harm to the secular interests of the community is involved in a typical sex practice in private between consenting adult partners"; and that "there is the fundamental question of the protection to which every individual is entitled against state interference in his personal affairs when he is not hurting others."

Judge Murtagh feels it is regrettable that "no changes have been made regarding the laws dealing with homosexual conduct." The Judge thinks that the failure to recognize that "attempts by the State to enlarge its authority and invade the individual conscience, however highminded, always fail and frequently do positive harm," is the "great weakness of the criminal law in the U. S."³⁵

The laws still exist although there is a very slight indication that public opinion may be changing to a less condemnatory attitude. Recently an article appeared in the Greensboro Daily News under the headline "YOUNG MAN SEEKS HELP WITH PROBLEM." The article stated that "a 22-year-old confessed homosexual pleaded for help in 'turning away from my past' in tense testimony heard yesterday in Guilford Superior Court."³⁶ The fact that the newspaper printed such a story in a straightforward manner without any biasing slant indicates that the public may at last be beginning to be informed of some of the problems of the individual homosexual. It would be an improvement if public opinion were to progress to the point that homosexuality would be considered an "illness" in the same way as is alcoholism.

A good many clinicians take the position that most homosexuals are primarily neurotic. Karen Horney contends that homosexuality may be a result of a neurotic need for affection, particularly if the way to the opposite sex is barred by too much anxiety.³⁷ Edmund Bergler in Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life? insists that homosexuality

is in fact a therapeutically changeable subdivision of neurosis....Homosexuality is not the "way of life" these

sick people gratuitously assume it to be, but a neurotic distortion of the total personality....there are no healthy homosexuals. The entire personality structure of the homosexual is pervaded by the unconscious wish to suffer; this wish is gratified by self-created trouble-making. This "injustice-collecting" (technically psychic masochism) is conveniently deposited in the external difficulties confronting the homosexual. If they were to be removed--and in some circles in large cities they have been virtually removed--the homosexual would still be an emotionally sick person.³⁸

Ruth Benedict questions the contentions that homosexuality necessarily has to be accompanied by neuroses and that homosexuals cannot be useful members of society despite their "difference." Her opinions are based on extensive comparisons of cultural patterns in different societies.

When the homosexual response is regarded as a perversion, however, the invert is immediately exposed to all the conflicts to which the aberrant are always exposed. His guilt, his sense of inadequacy, his failures, are consequences of the disrepute which social tradition visits upon him; and few people can achieve a satisfactory life unsupported by the standards of the society. The adjustments that society demands of them would strain any man's vitality, and the consequences of this conflict we identify with their homosexuality.³⁹

What we are dealing with here are different conceptions of the term abnormality. Each of the groups discussed above has measured homosexuality against a different standard of "normal" sex behavior. Homosexuality is abnormal in the statistical sense, i.e. a much larger percentage of the total population is heterosexual rather than homosexual. Kinsey estimated that about 4%⁴⁰ of the total male population is exclusively homosexual throughout their lives and that approximately 1-3%⁴¹ of the total female population is. It is

interesting to note here that at least some acquaintance with homosexuality may not be so statistically abnormal as we think. Kinsey estimated that approximately 37% of the total male population has had at least some overt experience (measured in terms of orgasms) with homosexuality and approximately 13% of the total female population has had similar experience.⁴² This still does not include those people who have had some slight contact with homosexuality which did not lead to overt experience.

As we have seen homosexuality is abnormal in the normative sense, being definitely disallowed by cultural prescriptions. There is a sense in which the culture itself may be considered abnormal. When the culture may in part be responsible for the development of what it terms "abnormal" behavior, we may say that the culture is not providing adequate means for the attainment of its valued goals. When

both the culture goals and the institutional practices have been thoroughly assimilated by the individual and imbued with affect and high value, but accessible institutional avenues are not productive of success,⁴³

the individual may be forced to improvise means of achieving the cultural goals or else he must retreat. In applying this to the homosexual we may say that although he accepts and values the cultural goals (particularly success, happiness, achievement) he cannot achieve these through the channels of heterosexuality. Thus, he must substitute, in addition to his homosexual relationships, some means of concealing them.

Robin Williams has observed that behavior may become "fictional"

when the culturally ascribed meaning of the behavior is in opposition to the privately held meanings actually operative in the situation....In our own society, as in others, it continually happens that certain beliefs are expressed, values stated, assumptions accepted, actions performed when the participants in the pattern themselves recognize fictional ("pretend") elements in what they are saying or doing. In a great many of these patterns, not "hypocrisy," but functional deviousness is perhaps the most meaningful characterization of the situation....Where it is vital to have confidence, we often act "as if" our beliefs were more secure than we inwardly feel them to be.⁴⁴

Thus, the homosexual may marry, have children, participate in derogatory joking about homosexuals, prevaricate on application blanks and during interviews and investigations, and still reach the culturally valued goal of happiness through his homosexual relationships. This happiness may enable him to achieve, through seemingly acceptable means, the other goals of achievement and success. In truth we are talking here of the exceptional homosexual. There are many who cannot stand the strain and who either retreat from life into the inner circle of the homosexual sub-culture, or who change or sublimate their true leanings.

It is a tragedy of our culture that this latter group, those who change or sublimate, must be nearly as secretive concerning their past sexual tendencies as those who continue to participate in homosexual activities. If they are found out, change or no change, they are still branded by the culture and prevented from pursuing (with equal opportunity among their more "normal" brothers) the paths leading to success and happiness. The homosexual is characterized by his culture as "perverse," "a security risk" (because of the danger

of blackmail), "undeserving" of the rights and privileges of "normal" people--he has "sinned" against God and man and is fit only for condemnation and punishment.

Subcultures and the Homosexual:

Within this section we are primarily concerned with those who find that they cannot live under the normative system provided for them in the larger American society. The way of life which they cannot escape, or do not want to escape, is too heavily threatened. They must retreat into a smaller reference group in which they can find support from members with similar predilections. In discussing this sub-culture we are dealing mainly with those who live out their lives within the inner circle of the deviant group. The sub-culture may also serve as a sort of reprieve for those who live mostly within the context of the larger society but occasionally must escape from it.

Kirson Weinberg has described the deviant group as being characterized by conflict with, and frequently isolation from conventional society.

1. Members of the deviant group acquire orientations from deviant associates with whom they identify and with whom they satisfy their basic needs.
2. The deviant group has specified skills, codes norms, to which the members conform.
3. The deviant group is a conflict-group and imposes a measure of secrecy upon its members. "Once having put himself into conflict with society, society's rules cease to exist for him. He swiftly recognizes that his life and liberty depend upon the loyalty of his fellows, and to get loyalty, he must give it."
4. The deviant group becomes conscious of its collective identity as a cohesive in-group and has techniques for differentiating its members from strangers.

5. The deviant group has definite rationalizations which heighten its morale, and it has status differences among the participating members.
6. The member of a deviant group prefers deviant associates to conventional associates.⁴⁵

Both Donald Webster Cory and Ann Aldrich have given excellent descriptions of the homosexual sub-culture. We will see as this discussion progresses that their descriptions justify quite adequately the use of the term "sub-culture" as Weinberg has characterized it.

Cory contends that

there is not one submerged world, one society on the fringe of society, but several, almost countless, different and disparate and dis-similar and almost disconnected, yet all having some relationship to one another, sometimes through an individual or two who travel in several of these submerged island societies at once, or related on the other hand merely by the similarity of pursuits and personalities, or perhaps related primarily by the association that exists only in the imagination of the hostile world.⁴⁶

A group may be brought together to discuss their common bonds, to seek new relationships, simply for companionship, or for any other number of reasons. Few people come into these groups who are not at least tending toward homosexuality. Observers are not usually welcome unless they are known by the group and accepted as interested and "safe" straights (the sub-cultural term for heterosexuals).

There is one chief way of recognizing those who are homosexual or who are initiated to the sub-culture. There is a language fairly widely known among homosexuals but little known in the outside world. The term for one who is homosexual is gay. The person who goes into the deviant group for the first time and wishes to be initiated does

well to go with a person who is gay and who knows the language and norms of the group. Once introduced into a gay group and accepted one finds it easy to learn from others in the group. To know the facts of life means to be aware of the homosexual way of life. Trade denotes a person who has physical homosexual relations with another and it usually implies that the relationship is of short duration.

The gay group is the circle, the masquerade ball is a drag, the transvestist is dressed in drag, to behave effeminately is to camp, the person who is effeminate is called a camp, his opposite number is rough trade,... to look for a temporary love-mate is to cruise.⁴⁷

A butch is a masculine female homosexual who dresses in drag. A fem is a feminine female homosexual and a queen is a feminine male homosexual.

The drags, the gay parties, and the gay bars provide the best groupings in which to observe the sub-culture in operation. For its own protection, there are norms in the homosexual sub-culture which call for discretion, secrecy, illuiveness or prevarication upon direct questioning, use of the special vocabulary, and wearing of a mask (sometimes to the point of marriage) by showing enough interest in the opposite sex to preclude suspicion. These norms may be seen to exist not only for the individual homosexual living in the larger society, but also in the gay bars and other gathering places of homosexuals. Even though greater freedom of activity is allowed in these places there are still rules concerning proper and discreet behavior. A usual "house rule" in most of these places is expressed in the phrase "Keep it Gay!"⁴⁸ Light conversation, candor, no

indiscreet display of emotion, and no disorderliness are the usual types of acceptable behavior in the gay bars.

As a result of the tremendous negative sanction which the larger society invokes against homosexuality, there is a general feeling of sympathy among homosexuals for all social outcasts. This sympathy almost reaches the dimensions of normative behavior and serves the purpose of assuring the homosexual that he is not society's only outcast.

Donald Cory describes what he calls "The Search for a Hero"⁴⁹ in which he discusses the homosexual's attempt to rationalize his participation in homosexuality. The homosexual is always on the lookout for a justification for his existence and for his persistence in homosexual activity. By championing the claims of scholars concerning the homosexual bent of such great figures as Leonardo Da Vinci, Plato, Wagner, Gide, Proust, Tchaikowsky, Whitman, and Tennyson (not to mention Oscar Wilde), the homosexual arrives at the rationalization that homosexuality is associated with greatness. He is quick to incorporate the results of studies which show the homosexual to be superior in intelligence (as some legitimate studies have) into his store of knowledge forming the basis of his raison d'etre. In short, he elaborates the "good" qualities of homosexuals based on information from "reliable" sources. It serves the purpose of justifying to the larger society the existence of homosexuality (although to date it has done little other than to attempt to justify homosexuality for homosexuals; the larger society has not been greatly impressed).

Conclusion:

Whether or not homosexuality is moral or immoral, necessarily a neurotic reaction or a normal, though exceptional one, should not be the direct concern of the sociologist. Nor is the job of the sociologist to place blame in any one place for the development of deviant sexual behavior, whether it be with the parents or with other agents of the process of socialization or with the individual himself. The problem which must be approached sociologically is that of the inconsistencies which exist in our society which hold on the one hand that individuals are products of their environments and that they must be taught what is proper behavior and what is not, and yet on the other hand roundly condemns individuals who have been improperly instructed or through other factors in their environment have been led into homosexual behavior. When members of society--no matter how great or small the number--are observed to be in constant conflict with the normative order and find that they can exist only by fleeing from it, and when they must lie to protect themselves from society it seems that we should re-evaluate that portion of our normative system which is in question. Unless re-evaluation takes place we will continue to regard homosexuals, along with criminals and the mentally ill, who after having been rehabilitated still find no place within a society which says to them as it says to Communists, "Are you now, or have you ever been..."

FOOTNOTES

¹Earl Raab and Gertrude Jaeger Selznick, Major Social Problems, (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson and Company, 1959), p. 9.

²Horace B. English and Ava Champney English, A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms: A Guide to Usage, (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), p. 242.

³Donald Webster Cory, The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach, (New York: Greenberg: Publisher, 1951), p. 106.

⁴English and English, op. cit., p. 243.

⁵Andre Gide, The Journals, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), II, p. 246.

⁶Dr. Albert Ellis, Phd., The Folklore of Sex, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1951, 1961), p. 185.

⁷Georgene H. Seward, Phd., Sex and the Social Order, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1946), p. 177.

⁸Eugene de Savitsch, M. D., Homosexuality, Transvestism, and Change of Sex, (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1958), p. 16.

⁹Herbert A. Bloch, Disorganization: Personal and Social, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 415.

¹⁰Frank A. Beach, Hormones and Behavior, (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1948), pp. 60, 70, 72.

¹¹Dr. A. A. Brill, tr. and ed., The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1938), p. 560n.

¹²Franz Alexander, M. D., Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1948), p. 43.

¹³Lewis M. Terman and Catharine Cox Miles, Sex and Personality: Studies in Masculinity and Femininity, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1936), p. 257.

¹⁴Ann Aldrich, We Walk Alone, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publication, Inc., 1955), p. vii.

¹⁵Ibid., p. viii.

- ¹⁶Cory, op. cit., pp. x, xi.
- ¹⁷Cory, op. cit., pp. 72-73; and Aldrich, op. cit., pp. 17-30.
- ¹⁸Alex Inkeles, "Some Sociological Observations on Culture and Personality Studies," in Personality: In Nature, Society, and Culture, Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray, eds., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 581.
- ¹⁹Eric Homburger Erikson, "Growth and Crises of the 'Healthy Personality,'" in Ibid., p. 195.
- ²⁰Ibid., pp. 199-200.
- ²¹Ibid., pp. 207-208.
- ²²Ibid., p. 216.
- ²³Ibid., pp. 221-222.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 223.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Supra, p. 16.
- ²⁷Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1937), p. 61.
- ²⁸Supra, p. 17.
- ²⁹S. Kirson Weinberg, Social Problems in Our Time, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 7.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 8.
- ³¹Robin M. Williams, American Society: A Sociological Intrepretation, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 2nd. ed., p. 373.
- ³²Genesis 19: 1-13.
- ³³Leviticus 19: 22.
- ³⁴Cory, op. cit., pp. 281-292.
- ³⁵John M. Murtagh, Review of The Wolfenden Report: Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution, Sir John Wolfenden, C. B. E., Chairman of the Committee, Saturday Review, XLVI, No. 18, (May 4, 1963), 31-32.

³⁶Greensboro Daily News, (Greensboro, N. C.), March 29, 1963, p. 1, Section B. (See also pp. vii et seq. of this paper).

³⁷Horney, op. cit., p. 119.

³⁸Edmund Bergler, Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?, (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1957), p. 9.

³⁹Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture, (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1958, by arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 245.

⁴⁰Alfred C. Kinsey, et. al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1948), p. 651.

⁴¹Alfred C. Kinsey, et. al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1953), p. 474.

⁴²Ibid., p. 487.

⁴³Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949, 1957), p. 153.

⁴⁴Williams, op. cit., p. 393.

⁴⁵Weinberg, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

⁴⁶Cory, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 112-113.

⁴⁸Aldrich, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁹Cory, op. cit., p. 157.

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